

From: Chris Worley
To: Microsoft ATR
Date: 1/2/02 1:06pm
Subject: Microsoft Settlement

Sir/Ma'am,

I find the proposed Microsoft antitrust settlement to be just short of an apology to Microsoft.

It will do nothing to stop their anticompetitive behavior. It will do nothing to spur competition in the software industry. It gives Microsoft carte blanche to continue to run roughshod over consumers and competition.

The media has well documented that every key provision in this settlement has an "opt out" for Microsoft.

The one I'm most concerned with is the "security" "opt out" in the "open protocols" section...

"Security" has become a buzzword associated with terrorist acts, allowing Microsoft to portray competing vendor's software compatibility with authentication software as an act of treason.

It's just not so. "Security through obscurity" has never stopped hackers with ill intent, it only keeps those being attacked "in the dark". It's much like human viri: we want to know what can infect us, how to keep from getting infected, how to detect the infection, and how to stop the infection (even if it can't be stopped). This information is key to our longevity. For example, the recent anthrax terrorist acts have shown that public information is critical to detection and cure, and the lack of information led to unnecessary infection (of postal workers) and panic among the uninfected, and did nothing to stop the perpetrator.

Software viri/worms require the same publicity to protect and inform the population.

I'm afraid Microsoft has negotiated this loophole in the settlement with ill-intent in mind: stopping compatible products from competing under the guise of stopping terrorism.

For example, a software package called "Samba" competes with Microsoft NT file servers: file servers compatible with the protocols that provide you with your "network neighborhood". If Microsoft can hide the authentication protocol, then the competing file server software can't compete: if you have to have an NT server to authenticate users, then you might as well use that server to serve files and not use

Samba at all. For Samba to compete, it must be able to perform all the necessary protocols for Microsoft's network file services.

This settlement is a ruse. It's a trap. And, the DOJ seems overly willing to fall for it, to the detriment of competition and consumers.

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